

WOODBRIIDGE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS WOODBRIIDGE TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

MINUTES

May 16, 2023

The regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners/Traffic Authority took place in the Training Room at the Police Department on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 6:15 p.m.

- Chairman Berke called the Traffic Authority meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.

Commissioners Present-

Chairman Robert Berke
Commissioner Andrew Esposito, Jr.
Commissioner Deborah Desir
Commissioner Mica Cardozo
Commissioner Henry Kopel

Police Administration Present-

Chief Frank P. Cappiello
Deputy Chief Ronald E. Smith, Jr.
Administrative Assistant Janice Innocenzi

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- There were no Public Comments.

TRAFFIC MATTERS:

- CT / DOT – Urban Speed Sign Project: Working with the UConn Training and Technology Assistance Center, we acquired two free electronic urban speed feedback signs, which will be mounted on local roads. These new signs are similar to the electronic signs we already have posted near Beecher Road School and the high school. The intention of the signs is to provide feedback to drivers regarding their travel speed, in an effort to reduce traffic accidents. Operating on a cloud-based software system, which is maintained by UConn, these signs also have the capability to collect speed and volume data. Moving forward, we will be working with Public Works to get the signs mounted at two locations, yet to be determined. The signs are moveable and can be relocated in the future.
- CT / DOT – Center Line Rumble Strip Project: In connection with their 2023 construction season, the CT DOT is planning to resurface various highways. In our jurisdiction, they will be paving Amity Road, beginning at Walker Lane and going north into Bethany. In conjunction with this, they will also be installing centerline rumble strips on Amity Road, starting at Appletree Lane and going northbound into Bethany. Centerline rumble strips are seen throughout town on many roads, and are a proven safety countermeasure that substantially reduces traffic accidents.
- CT / DOT – Curve Sign Markings: The CT DOT notified us of another project, which will be the installation of horizontal alignment warning signs on various roads throughout municipalities across the state. The project involves the installation of yellow retro-reflective strips and sheeting on the signposts along various curves to improve motorists' awareness of a change in the roadway.
- Meetinghouse Lane – Parking: Towards the end of March and with the start of the warmer weather, we began receiving complaints about Amity High School students parking on Meetinghouse Lane, and in adjacent municipal building parking lots, which resulted in them leaving very limited accessible parking for employees and patrons coming to conduct business at Town Hall, The Center, and the Library. The Deputy Chief worked with Amity school administrators, our School Resource Officer, Patrol Officers and Supervisors, to resolve the off-campus parking problem as it applied to parking on Meetinghouse Lane. Now the problem has shifted to other parking lots, like the Library, and the Deputy Chief is working with the Patrol Division to alleviate and monitor that through the end of the school year.

- Merritt Ave/Miles Ave/Manila Ave (Update): Regarding the request from the Town Planning & Zoning Commission regarding the Manila Ave., Miles Ave., Merritt Ave. situation, as of April 28 that whole area has been reposted with “No Parking” signs by Public Works.
- Commissioner Desir joined the meeting at 6:21 pm.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Kopel) to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Traffic Authority and move directly into the regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners at 6:21 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Janice Innocenzi, Administrative Assistant

WOODBIDGE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS WOODBIDGE TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES

May 16, 2023

The regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners/Woodbridge Traffic Authority took place in the Training Room at the Police Department on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 6:15 p.m.

- Chairman Berke called the regular meeting to order at 6:22 p.m.

Commissioners Present-

Chairman Robert Berke

Commissioner Andrew Esposito, Jr.

Commissioner Deborah Desir

Commissioner Mica Cardozo

Commissioner Henry Kopel

Police Administration Present-

Chief Frank P. Cappiello

Deputy Chief Ronald E. Smith, Jr.

Administrative Assistant Janice Innocenzi

APPROVAL of MINUTES:

- B.O.P.C. Regular Meeting – March 20, 2023

The Board voted (Kopel/Desir) to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners/Woodbridge Traffic Authority held March 20, 2023.

Votes in Favor: Berke, Desir, Kopel

Abstained: Esposito, Cardozo

Motion passes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- There were no Public Comments.

REVIEW of REPORTS:

- **Financial Report:** Chief Cappiello reported that after completing the first ten months of the fiscal year, we remain on track at an approximately 82% budget expenditure level. As reported at previous meetings, the Police Overtime and Dispatch Overtime lines continue to be significantly affected. The Dispatch line overage was from when we were down one Dispatcher, but has now leveled off since a new Dispatcher was hired and has now completed her training and became part of minimum manpower. We now have two Dispatchers on each shift, which will significantly reduce overtime. The Police overtime line is still up due to a vacancy and several absences. Repair – Maintenance Vehicles is up due to high mileages and the high cost of parts and repairs.

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Kopel) to accept the Financial Report.

- **Activity Report:** Chief Cappiello reported the following -

Criminal Activity Report (March-April)-

- Assault: 1 (suspect arrested and charged)
- Burglaries: 5 (4 commercial / 1 residential)
- Family Dispute: 1 (arrest made)
- Fraud Cases: 11 (altered checks, attempted fraudulent land transactions, attempted fraudulent unemployment benefit claims, identity theft)
- Larceny Cases: 6 (missing jewelry & finances, catalytic converter thefts, parked vehicles being entered)
- Missing Persons: 1 (elderly resident with dementia, successfully located)

ISU – (Investigative Services Unit):

- New Case Investigations: 24
- Public Fingerprinting Requests: 15
- Pistol Permit Applications Processed & Background Checks Completed: 10
- Arrests: 8 (6 commercial burglaries, 1 electronic stalking, 1 residential burglary)

Motor Vehicle Activity Report (Patrol Division):

Deputy Chief Ronald Smith reported the following –

- March: 107 - Motor Vehicle Stops (57% increase from February)
360 - Radar Speed Enforcement
363 - Deterrent Traffic Safety Patrols
25 - Accidents (4% increase from February)
Speed Trailer was located on North Racebrook Road and Peck Hill Road.
- April: 90 - Motor Vehicle Stops (16% decrease from March)
346 - Radar Speed Enforcement
351 - Deterrent Traffic Safety Patrols
24 - Accidents (4% decrease from March)
Speed Trailer was located on Center Road, Round Hill Road and Beecher Road.

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Desir) to accept the Activity Report.

REPORT of the CHIEF of POLICE

- Axon Body-Worn Camera/Dashboard Camera Project – Status Update: As previously reported, we switched over to the new Axon Body-Worn Cameras in January. During the last week of March, Axon had a crew of technicians here onsite at the Police Department and they completed the installation of all the new Dashboard Cameras in our Patrol fleet. Det. Iannucci, our technology liaison, worked closely with them and he was instrumental in making it a seamless transition for the Officers. We officially discontinued using our old Digital Ally systems and are fully outfitted and operational with the new Axon camera systems and the evidence submission portal for court.
- Dispatch Center Renovation – Status Update: We have made significant progress in both the design phase and getting multiple vendors on site to give us price quotes associated with moving the phones, 911 system, camera, intercoms and radio system so Dispatch can be temporarily relocated to the Training Room during the renovation. The final specifications, design and bid sets were recently completed by the project designer from Silver, Petrucelli & Associates. The Finance Director will be putting the project out to bid in the next week or so, after which a walk-through will be scheduled for prospective contractors. I expect the bid process will be closed toward the end of June, at which point we hope to move forward.
- S2 Door Access Project – Status Update: The installation of the S2 Door Access Control System in the Police Department began in April. The initial start date had been postponed for over a year due to pandemic associated manufacturing and shipping delays related to the system’s electronic parts and software components. The work is being done by JKS Security, which is the same company that installed similar systems in Town Hall, The Center, and our other municipal buildings. The work is expected to be completed later this month, with 14 of the system’s 16 ports utilized. Funding for the final 2 remaining ports was cut from our FY23-24 budget request and I’m anticipating it will be approved for FY 24-25 to finalize the project. Once completed, this will be an enhancement, not only to the safety and security of our facility, but also with our documented preservation of the operational integrity associated with prisoner detention and the storage of reports, criminal records, weapons, property and evidence.
- Beecher Road School SRO - MOU: The memorandum of understanding between the Police Department and the Woodbridge School District pertaining to the School Resource Officer at Beecher Road School, is due to be renewed at the end of this fiscal year. The MOU is automatically renewed annually, and the only change planned is on the signature page, where we should replace Dr. Budd’s name and signature with that of the new Superintendent, Vonda Tenza. I spoke with Vonda last week and she is pleased with our Police Department and the SRO. Chairman Berke wishes to review the MOU for corrections before he signs off.

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Cardozo) to accept the Report of the Chief of Police.

PERSONNEL MATTERS:

- **Extended Absence (Updates):** Our Patrol Officer who had been out on extended medical leave since December was fully cleared for duty and returned to work April 17, which was great news for him and the Department. Currently, we have 2 Supervisors out on extended absences. The first is a Workers' Comp related extended medical leave, which began March 27, and he is anticipated to be out of work for approximately the next two months. The second is associated with an unanticipated medical issue, which occurred on April 21, and the duration of his absence is uncertain at this point, but is anticipated to be a couple of months. As we head into the busier warm summer months, these two absences, coupled with the retirement vacancy we are trying to fill, are going to keep posing staffing challenges and will continue to impact our overtime line.
- **Hiring Status:** At our last meeting, after having no successful new recruit candidates from the last round of regional testing through the South Central Criminal Justice hiring process, we agree to move forward in seeking a potential Certified Officer to hire. That job opportunity was posted March 22, but thus far we have not received any applications from CT POSTC Certified Officers. We are not alone with this shortage of applicants; it is statewide and nationwide. The reality is that there are a lot of openings everywhere and certified candidates have many options and their choice of departments to pick from, and unfortunately, we are on the lower end of the pay scale and no longer offer health benefits upon retirement. My concern is that with our staff having been reduced by 3 officers over the past few years, we have been doing our best at getting the job done with a staff of only 23 sworn, but with the one vacancy and two extended absences, we are currently down and only operating with 20 officers.

As mentioned during our FY24 proposed operating budget presentation to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance, operating with 23 sworn, left us with only two officers on patrol during 2022 for almost 1/3 of the time (32.15%). Additionally, 11% of the calls responded to during that time required at least a two officer response, so while they were tied up, there were no other officers available to respond to other calls, thus leaving the town unprotected. Unfortunately, for the second year in a row, our funding request for one additional officer was not approved for the upcoming fiscal year. We are experiencing more and more incidents raising concern about public and officer safety due to our frequency of operating at a minimum staffing of only two officers.

Since April 1, there were several issues that we noticed, and our staff brought to our attention:

- **April 4:** C Squad – A vehicle that the New Haven Police Department and the Shooting Task Force were trying to stop through various towns, stop sticks had been deployed, and the vehicle became disabled in the Ansonia/Northrop area. A foot chase ensued through the residential area, there was a firearm involved. We only had two officers working. At the same time while officers were tied up there, we received multiple 911 calls involving a disturbance and shoplifters that escalated into a robbery at Phillips 66. Our response was delayed, and the subjects all fled.
- **April 5:** C Squad - Only 2 officers working. They were dealing with a mental health related issue, and they were tied up with that, which resulted in a delayed response to a car accident on Rte. 69.
- **April 11:** Only 2 officers working. Two burglaries took place overnight. Officers were tied up at a commercial burglary and shortly after, a break-in occurred at another business where the ATM machine was stolen.
- **April 11:** Only 2 officers working. There was a daytime catalytic converter theft, where a gun was brandished.
- **May 11:** Larceny incident in the lower business area and when officers attempted to take the subject into custody, he became violent. Officers had to go hands-on and used the taser. The hood of the patrol car was dented by arrestee. That same night, we had 3 Officers working. They received multiple 911 calls of a fight on lower Rte. 69. While they were all tied up at the fight, a panic alarm call came in from a residence on the other end of town and we had to rely on Seymour Police Department for mutual aid on a routine call. Requests for mutual aid are usually for exigent circumstances, not for routine calls.

Compounding this even more is that we have other Officers who are eligible to leave at any time now, or who will be able to leave in the very near future, which will really be critical to our operations. Moving forward,

and with contract negotiations on the horizon, I think it is imperative that we address these issues, to both attract potential candidates and to address Officer retention and the safety of our Officers and the community.

If the Board agrees, I think we should reopen the process to new recruits (non-certified officers) as well, so that we are prepared to fill this one vacancy and any others that may arise, as soon as possible.

- **Recognition:** In your packets you received copies of several Letters of Recognition and Commendation, that I issued to several of our Sergeants and Officers for various exemplary, well done investigations, which I would like to formally acknowledge for the record.

Detective Iannucci and Detective Luzzi for their prompt, comprehensive, fraud investigation of an online attempted theft of more than \$97,000 from a resident's bank account. They were able to freeze that account and have all the missing funds returned to the complainant's account. This had to be done quickly because it involved cryptocurrency.

Sgt. Pedalino, Officer DiMatteo, Officer Lalli and Officer Prentice for their investigation of a motor vehicle accident that occurred during the overnight hours in which all of the occupants abandoned and fled from the offending vehicle, which had been reported stolen out of New Haven. Their combined efforts resulted in the apprehension of suspects hiding in the area and two additional suspects being identified and arrested shortly thereafter.

Sgt. Cappiello, Detective Iannucci, Detective Luzzi and Officer Sapione (SRO at Amity High School) for their expeditious investigation into an online threat of a potential school shooting that was being circulated. Working collaboratively with the FBI, Orange Police Department, and high school administration to determine the internet provider source and ultimately identified and arrested the person responsible for making the threat.

Officer Capozzo for his alertness in locating a vehicle reported being operated erratically by an operator who was observed to have facial injuries, and for Officer Capozzo's actions after the operator abandoned her car and fled, running towards the Wilbur Cross Parkway, where he ultimately subdued and took the operator into protective custody, preventing further injury to herself and to the motoring public on the parkway.

Sgt. Cappiello for his actions in taking a suspect into custody on Whalley Avenue in New Haven without incident, who he recognized as fitting the description of a suspect involved in a forcible commercial burglary in our town several hours earlier.

Sgt. Rizzuti, Officer Gerald Kubik and Officer Joseph Kubik for their investigation of a motor vehicle accident in which several occupants fled from the offending vehicle, which had been reported stolen out of New Haven. Their combined efforts resulted in locating and apprehending all five juveniles responsible who were associated with the theft of the vehicle.

Sgt. Cappiello, Detective Iannucci and Detective Luzzi for their investigation of a several-week spree of nine forcible overnight commercial burglaries that plagued our business area, as well as others in the Westville section of New Haven. Their collective efforts and collaboration with the New Haven Police Department, resulted in identifying all the persons responsible, clearing all nine of the Woodbridge burglaries with arrests, and bringing this Woodbridge/New Haven burglary spree to an end.

Chief Cappiello thanked them all for a job well done!

NEW BUSINESS:

- There were no new business matters to discuss.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Esposito) to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Janice Innocenzi, Administrative Assistant

WOODBIDGE TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

MOTIONS

May 16, 2023

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- There were no Public Comments.

TRAFFIC MATTERS:

- There were no motions made; no votes taken, during the discussion of traffic matters.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Kopel) to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Traffic Authority and move directly into the regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners at 6:21 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Janice Innocenzi, Administrative Assistant

WOODBRIIDGE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

MOTIONS

May 16, 2023

APPROVAL of MINUTES:

- B.O.P.C. Regular Meeting – March 20, 2023

The Board voted (Kopel/Desir) to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners/Woodbridge Traffic Authority held March 20, 2023.

Votes in Favor: Berke, Desir, Kopel

Abstained: Esposito, Cardozo

Motion passes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- There were no Public Comments.

REVIEW of REPORTS:

- FINANCIAL REPORT:

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Kopel) to accept the Financial Report.

- Activity Report:

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Desir) to accept the Activity Report.

REPORT of the CHIEF of POLICE

The Board voted unanimously (Esposito/Cardozo) to accept the Report of the Chief of Police.

PERSONNEL MATTERS:

- There were no motions made, no votes taken, during the discussion of Personnel Matters.

NEW BUSINESS:

- There were no new business matters to discuss.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Board voted unanimously (Kopel/Esposito) to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Police Commissioners at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Janice Innocenzi, Administrative Assistant